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A
LETTER
FROM A
GENTLEMAN
IN
SCOTLAND
TO HIS
FRIEND
AT
LONDON.

LONDON,
Printed in the Year 1712.

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Edinburgh, Jan. 29. 17th.

Dear Sir,

I thank you for your last, that gave me an Account of the late Act against the Protestant Dissenters of *England*, with an Abridgment of the Bill brought into the House of Commons for tolerating the Episcopal Dissenters in *Scotland*. You know my Thoughts about Toleration; I was ever for it, and ever an Enemy to Persecution for Conscience-sake; therefore I shall not need to trouble you on that Subject. But since you desire me to write my Thoughts with all Freedom of this Bill, I shall readily obey you.

Before I did read it, I expected it might be for such a Toleration here as is in *England*, neither more nor less, with the same indulgence and Restrictions Civil and Ecclesiastick; which tho' some more warm Presbyterians here would not formally desire, yet would peaceably acquiesce in for the sake of the Quiet of the Kingdom. But I find it is rather for the establishing of another Church in *Scotland* by Law, upon almost an equal footing with the establish'd Kirk; and most People of all

orts will reckon it as an Introduction to the abolishing of Presbytery in *Scotland* and the making the Union more compleat by an Uniformity of Church-Government, Worship and Discipline. Now methink it concerns you that are at the Helm to enquire, If to establish the Episcopal Dis-
sidents, according to the Plan of the Bill be just and safe. As for the Justice of it, know 'tis dangerous to say that an Act of Parliament is unjust, or to say that the Parliament can do an illegal thing: But you know the People of *Scotland* of all Denominations are apt enough to speare their Minds; and if they think such a Act unwarrantable upon the foot of the Union, they will not stick to say so, especially considering that no sort of People were for the Union when it was a making. And tho this Bill is brought into Parliament all on a sudden, it has open'd the Mouths of all Men here, who cry out against it as an open Breach of the Union, a Violation of that solemn Pact between the two Independent Kingdoms, of which the fundamental Articles are to preserve the two Churches of *England* and *Scot-land* unalterable in all their several Rights and Privileges granted by former Parliaments, and ratify'd by the Act of Union. I shall not argue the Point with a Person whose Judgment, that knows the Constitu-

tion so well ; but only suggest, that all Men here conclude the Union is broken in several Points, and in this amongst the rest.

And so the next Enquiry will be, Whether 'tis safe to pass such a Bill into an Act of Parliament ? Some may be apt to conclude, that it is very safe for the Queen, the Parliament, the House of *Hannover*, the Ministry, and the Church of *England* : but by the most strict and impartial Search into the present Posture of Affairs that I can make, I must beg leave to conclude otherwise.

For her present Majesty having so often graciously assur'd the Kirk of all due Protection and Encouragement, and the Union having been reserv'd for the Glory of her Reign, and the People of *Scotland* having depended as much upon her Majesty's inviolable Honour and Goodness, as upon any other human Security of their stipulated Rights ; the passing such an Act might alienate the Hearts of her Subjects, even of those that have given the highest Proofs of Loyalty ; unless it were suppos'd that the Queen could not have declin'd the Royal Assent to it, which I hope this Parliament will never give ground of supposing.

Nor can the Parliament propose impregnable Safety by such an Act ; for it is like

to create such Confusions and Distractions in this part of the Island, as may occasion more Business for the Parliament than will be desir'd. I mean not only the many vexatious Appeals, that seem to be the natural Tendency of an Act so ambiguous in Expression, and that constitutes two different and independent Churches amidst a hot-brain'd People; but also the Animosities, Jealousies and Fears that may be easily dispers'd thro the Land, and by the Craft of some Men may be improv'd for an open Rebellion, that may require a Standing Army to suppress it. And how the Liberties of Parliament can be well preserv'd under a Standing Army in any part of the Island, I leave to your Consideration, who have read the several Opinions against it, of the Whigs in the Reign of King *Charles II.* and of the Tories in the Reign of King *William*.

And consequently it must look with an ill Aspect at the Protestant Succession in the House of *Hannover*; for except a very few, the Episcopal Dissenters are generally what we call Jacobites. They believe the inherent, indefeasible Right of the young Gentleman at *St. Germains*, and think themselves oblig'd in Conscience to assert his Right in due time, let the Consequences be ever so dismal to the Rights of

of the People Civil and Sacred. This being rooted in them for many years, tho their Policy should incline them to swallow the usual Oaths, they would either do it with a Reserve and private Exposition, or would be ready to say afterwards that those Oaths were taken in durance, and cram'd down their Throats by a powerful and successful Usurpation, and so not obligatory.

Therefore instead of consulting the Interest of the *Hannover* Succession by this Bill, you rather put it in the power of the most zealous and stanch Friends of the *St. Germains* Pretender, the more successfully to oppose that illustrious Family's succeeding to govern these Kingdoms after the Demise of the Queen. But I am also afraid that many others, now hearty Friends of the *Hannover* Succession, may be provok'd or decoy'd into dangerous and daring Measures against it, by the Hardships and Disorders that this Bill seems to threaten them with, if it pass into a Law without due Amendments: For does not every body know that the State of the Royal Burroughs, is of late many ways disgusted, and likewise the *Scotch* Nobility? Now if the Kirk shall be thus invaded too by such an Act, I cannot say how soon a strict Alliance may be commenc'd by these Three Great Bodies, for the Recovery of their Rights and Privileges, and some means us'd to re-

duce themselves in *statu quo*. If such a Design should ever be hatch'd, I doubt not but they would apply for some foreign Aid, as not being able to manage it alone: And then if the Pretender, nay if the *Great Mogul*, or any other Man (however averse they may be at present) did offer his Service to them for recovering their pristine State, they would, I am afraid, too readily comply to accept thereof, when chagrin'd, and fretted, and combin'd for that purpose. I need not add, that as the whole People of *Scotland*, except those that made the Union, which were but a few, were against it at first; so if it was to be made again, no Man durst or would offer an Argument for it, having had a sufficient Trial of it already.

But further, what Advantage can the Ministry propose by such Innovations? Surely they may remember the late Affair of Dr. *Sacheverel*, which being thought an Innovation, made way for their Management. And one would think they have not been so long in play as to secure the Game, and ward off any future Turn that an amus'd and disgusted People may be the unhappy occasion of. And if it appear they are concern'd in passing this Bill, they may expect the Kirk will pray for them in the words of *David*, *Lord turn the Counsel of Achitophel into Foolishness.*

Nor

Nor is it the Interest of the Church of *England* to pass this Bill : For tho at present that Church is not in Danger, the Queen and Parliament being entirely *English*, and all the Places of Profit and Trust bestow'd on those that cannot be Members of any other Church ; yet we know not what Evil may be upon the Earth, we are not sure of having always such a Monarch as Queen *ANNE*, and such a Parliament and Ministry as the present : And should there arise a *Pharaoh* that knew not *Joseph*, with a Parliament and Ministry to his Mind, I know not but the Rights and Privileges of the Church of *England* might be invaded. Then if the Reverend Lords the Bishops, or any others of their Communion, should plead against any Innovations or Infringements, because of the many Acts of Parliament in favour of the Church, which were all ratify'd by the Union as unalterable for ever ; would it not be reply'd, " Why, my Lords and Gentlemen, do you complain, after you have given us a Precedent for these Measures ? Did you not invade the Kirk of *Scotland* in the Year 17 $\frac{1}{2}$, that was as well secur'd by the Union, and in the same manner as the Church of *Englaud* was ? " Surely at such a Juncture all good Christians of the Church of *England* would be ready to say with *Joseph's* Brethren in time of their Distress ;

tress ; And they said one to another, we are verily guilty concerning our Brother, in that we saw the Anguish of his Soul when he besought us, and we would not hear : therefore is this Distress come upon us.

And thus I have given you the Reasons of my Opinion, and shewn that it is not safe for the Queen, the Parliament, the House of *Hannover*, the Ministry, and the Church of *England*. But I am also apprehensive that it is not safe even for the Episcopal Ministers and People. For those Episcopal Ministers that took the Oaths before *September 1695*, possess'd their Livings independently of the Kirk ; and those of them that survive, need no such *Act* in their favour. And tho the others are generally Nonjurors, yet they have erected many Meeting-Houses without being disturb'd, except when they have done some things on purpose to provoke a Disturbance. I need not mention the many Intrusions (as they say) into vacant Churches, by raising Rabbles and committing Riots, and wounding those of the Kirk that offer'd to plant the Vacancy with a legal Incumbent : This would be accounted High Treason in our *English* Dissenters. Several Churches and Chappels are also possess'd by the Episcopal Dissenting Ministers, without being molested. So that if you was here, you would acknowledg that there never was a National Church so much affronted by the Dissen-

Dissenters, that no Church could bear more patiently those Affronts, and that no Dissenters could be more uppish and daring, without giving the Government due Vouchers of their Loyalty. But this very Act will break the Party ; because they are divided both about the Religion of the Church of *England*, and also about taking the usual Oaths to the State, and praying as the Act perhaps may direct. And because there is a Design here to reduce all the *Scottish* Episcopal Ministers and People to the way of the Church of *England*, a Rupture must be the Consequence : Upon which account many of the Party are against the Bill as now model'd.

I need not inform you of the many Hardships the Kirk may think to sustain by such an Act, not doubting but when the Bill is debated, the Members of Parliament that are the Kirk's Friends will open that Point fully ; and some will expect that you will speak to it. But you may easily judg, many Confusions must follow the erecting of two legal Establishments, with equal intrinsick Jurisdiction ; whereby an Handle will be given to profane Persons of shifting their Church, in order to escape due Censure. But we hear that this Bill is design'd for some other Ends that are not fit to be nam'd, and which I leave you to guess at. And because People generally look on this Bill

Bill as a Preface to a speedy and total demolishing of Presbytery, and of a new Erection of Episcopacy after the *English* way, as the only legal Church, which creates further Jealousies, and renders most People susceptible of what I will not mention ; I shall refer you to a Noble Author, in order to guess at what may be the Consequence, by comparing former Times with the present. 'Tis the Earl of *Clarendon* in his *History of the Rebellion*, Vol. I. Book 2. from the beginning ; where his Lordship accounts for the Rise of the Troubles, and shews us plainly that the Spring of them was the introducing of the Canons and Liturgy into *Scotland*. I shall abridg a good deal thereof in his Lordship's own words. My Lord says, It was a fatal Inadvertency that the Canons had never been seen by the Assembly of the Clergy, it being almost impossible that any new Discipline could be introduc'd into the Church, which would not much concern the Government of the State, and even *trench* upon or refer to the municipal Laws of the Kingdom : and that in this Consideration the Archbishop of *Canterbury* had always declar'd to the Bishops of *Scotland*, " That it was their part " to be sure that nothing they should propose to the King in the Business of the " Church should be contrary to the Laws " of the Land, which he could not be " thought

“ thought to understand ; and that they
 “ should never put any thing in execution,
 “ without the Consent and Approbation of
 “ the Privy Council.” But it was the *un-
 happy Craft* of those few *Scotch* Bishops to
 get it believ’d by the King, that the Work
 would be grateful to the most considerable
 of the Nobility, the Clergy and the Peo-
 ple (which they could hardly believe) in
 order to the obtaining his Majesty’s App-
 probation and Authority for the Execution of
 that, which they did really believe would
 not find Opposition from the Nobility, the
 Clergy or People, against his Majesty’s ex-
 press Power and Will ; which without doubt
 was then in great Veneration in that King-
 dom. My Lord goes on afterwards to tell
 us, that as the Canons and Liturgy were
 things unheard of and new in *Scotland*, so
 were not then fit for that Nation ; that
 this gave occasion to cunning Men of sug-
 gesting to Men of all Conditions, that here
 was an entire new Model of Government in
 Church and State ; that it was thought no
 other than a Subjection to *England*, by re-
 ceiving Laws from thence, of which they
 were most jealous, which they passionately
 abhor’d : That they believ’d there was no
 part of their Civil Government uninvaded
 by the Canons, and no Persons of what
 Quality soever unconcern’d, and, as they
 thought, unhurt in them ; and that it was

an Approach and Introduction to Popery. And tho the *Scots* made no great noise, nor yet committed any open Disorder, except spreading Libels against the Bishops, till about the Month of *July* 1637. when the Liturgy was publish'd, and appointed to be read in all the Churches, it met with such a Reception as all Men know ; the City of *Edinburgh* being fill'd with Tumult, Hollowng and Out-crying, and bitter Execrations against Bishops and Popery. Hitherto no Person of Condition or Name appear'd, or seem'd to countenance this seditious Confusion, but the Rabble : and until the Bishops of *Scotland* sent an Express to the King about it, there was little Curiosity in the Court or Country of *England* to know what was done in *Scotland*. But all the Kingdom flock'd to *Edinburgh*, as in a general Cause that concern'd their Salvation, and resolv'd themselves into a Method of Government, erected several Tables, in which Deputies sat for the Nobility, the Gentlemen, the Clergy, and the Burgeses, and a Council to conduct their Affairs. They disobey'd the Orders and Proclamations of the King's Council, as if the Government were regularly in their hands. They call'd a General Assembly, whither they summon'd the Bishops before them, and for not appearing excommunicated them. And then they united themselves in their solemn

ievn League and Covenant. They got most of the Nobility and considerable Gentlemen either to join with them openly, or to be their secret Friends. And so at last they feiz'd on the King's Forts and Magazines, and rais'd an Army to withstand him.

I need not proceed to tell you what follow'd, which was fatal enough and too well known; but shall only remark, that tho the *English* Liturgy, Episcopacy, Canons and Ceremonies are like to be introduc'd into *Scotland* by an Act of Parliament, and not by the sole Pleasure of the Sovereign, yet I'm afraid the way of advising it is much the same as formerly. For it is now also the *Unhappy Craft* of some Men to get it believ'd, that the Work would be grateful to the most considerable Persons in *Scotland*. And therefore they represent the Presbyterians here as an inconsiderable Handful, deserted by all the Nobility and Gentry. But since I came into *Scotland*, I find this Report groundless: I confess indeed there are several Episcopal Lords and Gentlemen, and many more that are indifferent as to Church-Government; yet I'm pretty sure many of the first, and most of the others, would easily join the Nobility, Gentlemen, Clergy, and People of the Kirk, in preserving her Constitution entire without the least Innovation or Incroachment; saving that many of 'em are of my opinion, That

That the two Churches confirm'd by the Union should be equally maintain'd and encourag'd, and that the Dissenters of *Scotland* should enjoy the same, and no more Privileges than those of *England*, and upon the same Conditions. This is indeed the true way of maintaining the Peace of the Country, and a keeping of all things in a proper Ballance.

I hear there is a Succession of the *Scotch* Bishops intended, and that four or five have been privately ordain'd : But I shall not trouble you further at this time, having transgress'd the bounds of a common Misive already, for which I beg pardon. Only be pleas'd to accept of my Wife's Respects to you and yours ; and she hopes to see you at *London*, if you go not soon to your Country-Seat. I am,

Dear SIR,

Your much Obliged and

Obedient Servant, &c.